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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Property Address:	<b>2112-2146 Georgia Avenue, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Bond Bread Building Central Bus Garage</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>May 23, 2013</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>13-338; R1300018, R1300019</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	<b>X</b>	New Construction
			Demolition
		<b>X</b>	Subdivision

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Howard Town Center Developer, LLC (Cohen Companies), with plans prepared by GTM Architects and DP + Partners, seeks review of raze permit applications for the Bond Bread Building at 2146 Georgia Avenue, NW, and the Washington Railway and Electric Company (Central Bus Garage) at 2112 Georgia Avenue, NW; both buildings have been nominated for listing in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and will be considered for their eligibility in meeting the designation criteria prior to and separate from consideration of the proposed project. The applicant has also submitted a conceptual design review application to obtain the Board's comments on a mixed-use retail and residential development on the site.

**Property History and Description**

The property currently consists of two industrial buildings for which nominations to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and National of Register of Historic Places are pending for consideration by the Board.

*Washington Railway and Electric Company Garage*

The Washington Railway and Electric Company (Central Bus Garage) garage was constructed in 1930, and is the first known purpose-built bus garage for a transit fleet. As its name suggests, it company originated as a streetcar company, although its surplus electric generation was spun off into a subsidiary that became the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO). The building later became the Capital Transit Company's Central Bus Garage.

The building was designed by local architect Arthur B. Heaton, who undertook to make visually interesting what was in essence a simple box. He succeeded by varying the roofline with stepped parapets and the major wall planes with muscular piers in a manner consistent with the prevailing Art Deco style. Perhaps most notable about Heaton's design was his use of multi-hued decorative brick laid in common bond and basket weave patterns to provide texture and relieve the long expanses of wall. Heaton would return to the use of this tapestry brick in his design for the Western Bus Garage for the Capital Transit Company.

As outlined more fully in its report on the designation application, the HPO finds the property to meet DC Inventory Criterion B and National Register Criterion A for being associated with “institutions... or patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture or development of the District of Columbia or the nation.” It also meets DC Inventory Criterion D and National Register Criterion C for “embody[ing] the distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles, building types, or methods of construction... significant to the appearance and development of the District of Columbia or the nation.” The property meets the eligibility criteria for the resource subtype “bus garages” as set forth in the multiple-property document *Streetcar and Bus Resources of Washington, D.C., 1862-1962* adopted by the Board and by the National Register of Historic Places in 2000 (and amended in 2005).

### *Bond Bread Building*

The Bond Bread Factory was constructed in 1929 by the General Baking Company, a New York City baking conglomerate formed in 1911. Designed by Corry B. Comstock of New York, an architect who specialized in the design of bakeries, it is an impressive Art Deco-style industrial building, characterized by its white brick construction, zigurat configuration and Deco detailing, including channeled pilasters, recessed panels with decorative brick detailing, and terra cotta trimming. The front elevation, facing east onto Georgia Avenue, is the building’s most prominent.

The Bond Bread Factory meets DC Inventory Criterion B and National Register Criterion A because it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history and the development of the District of Columbia. In particular, the General Baking Company Bakery building provides an excellent illustration of the baking industry of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the city, which clustered in this neighborhood, and more particularly of the trend to build “sanitary” bakeries that responded to the principles of sanitation, nutrition, food safety and public health as it was understood at that time. It is an important survivor of one of the city’s historically largest and most notable industries, thus contributing to an understanding of the industrial development of the city and this neighborhood.

The Bond Bread Factory also meets DC Inventory Criterion D and National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction. The Bond Bread Factory not only survives as a premier example of a purpose-built bakery building, it also provides an excellent example of the use of the Art Deco style for an industrial building. According to findings from the D.C. Warehouse Survey (1991-1992), the Bond Bread Factory is one of only a handful of the city’s industrial buildings executed in the Art Deco style.

### **Proposal and Project Background**

The proposal calls for construction of a mixed-use retail and housing development known as the Howard Town Center. The plans call for an approximately 41,000 square foot grocery store, 36,500 feet of ground-level retail, and an unspecified number of residential units in six stories above the retail level; the residential units are organized around the

perimeter of the site opening to a large central courtyard. The project will have below grade parking with at-grade loading accessed from 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The elevations on Georgia Avenue, W Street and a portion of V Street are proposed as a series of differentiated, traditionally-inspired, tripartite façade elements with brick, stone and punched windows; the 8<sup>th</sup> Street elevation is expressed as a single contemporary composition with precast panels and floor-to-ceiling windows. The project would include extending W Street east-west through the site, just north of the development.

The design was initially developed without retention of the buildings, but has been revised in the last several months since the filing of the landmark applications in an effort to incorporate elements of them. The revised plans call for retention of the full Georgia Avenue frontage of the Bond Bread building to a depth of approximately 38 feet and retention of an 84 foot portion of the Central Bus Garage façade on Georgia Avenue.

The Central Bus Garage site is being developed as a ground lease in which Howard University will retain ownership of the land. The city-owned Bond Bread site was acquired through an agreement reached with the Deputy Mayor's Office for Economic Development.

### **Planning Considerations**

In 2003-2004, the Office of Planning, working with other partner agencies, private landowners and the community, developed the Uptown Destination District Plan, dubbed "DUKE" (after Duke Ellington), as a development framework plan to guide redevelopment of the U and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets corridors as an 18-hour arts, entertainment and cultural district. Promoting and reinforcing the historic character and African-American heritage of the area is a cornerstone of the plan, but which also recognizes the need for additional density and transit-oriented development to achieve the critical mass and desired vibrancy for the area. DUKE provides a series of recommendations for promoting high quality new design in coordination with the preservation of existing structures, encouraging additional "destination venues" that could enliven the area, promoting the area's history to encourage heritage tourism, enhancing the neighborhood's retail base, providing affordable housing, and addressing transportation and parking needs. The plan was adopted by the DC Council in June 2005.

The DUKE plan encourages respect for the (then newly-designated) U Street Historic District ("Enhance and respect the character and quality of life of the existing neighborhoods and their historic resources") and includes general guidance encouraging preservation of historic buildings ("Be forward-thinking and progressive in the design of new and infill projects and the public realm by integrating innovative design solutions with historically significant structures"). It did not identify potentially eligible historic properties outside the historic district nor preclude future designation and protection of such properties. DUKE is a policy document rather than an implementation plan, and did not result in rezoning or new programs for the area. It outlines how many of the plan's goals could be achieved through public-private coordination and existing tools and incentives, such as the HPRB design review process.

The Howard Town Center Area Sub-district section of the plan presumes redevelopment of the Bond Bread Building site, which is characterized in a chart of District Government property (page 9) merely by the square footage of its land, whereas landmark buildings such as the Howard and Lincoln Theaters are characterized by the square footage of the existing buildings. A recommendation regarding the Central Bus Garage appears on page 30: “Preserve existing Howard University property (all or some façade elements) at the northwest corner of V Street and Georgia Avenue. Incorporate into Howard Town Center for possible uses as a grocery store and other retail uses.”

The Bond Bread Building and Central Bus Garage are recognized and illustrated in Howard University’s campus plan within a chapter entitled “Campus Context: Neighborhood History and Historic Characteristics.” The section of the campus plan does not make any recommendations regarding eligibility for designation or appropriate treatments, but merely provides a brief historical sketch of certain resources.<sup>1</sup>

## **Evaluation**

### *Demolition*

As stated in the Historic Preservation Regulations (DCMR 10-C), work considered demolition under the Act shall include, but is not limited to, any of the following, as determined by the Mayor’s Agent:

- (a) The removal or destruction of any façade;
- (b) The removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the structural components of the building, such as structural walls, floor assemblies, and roofs;
- (c) The removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the roof along with all or substantially all of one or more exterior walls;
- (d) The removal or destruction of all or substantially all of an entire wing or appendage of the building, such as a rear ell, unless the wing lacks physical or historic integrity, or is not a character-defining feature;
- (e) The removal or destruction of a substantial portion that includes character-defining features of the building or structure;
- (f) The removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of a designated interior landmark, unless the elements to be removed lack physical or historic integrity, or are not character-defining features; or

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<sup>1</sup> The section regarding the subject buildings states: “In 1929, the General Baking Company, makers of Bond Bread, built a three-story brick bakery and garage on the west side of Georgia Avenue just south of W Street, NW. One year later and just south of General Baking’s plant, the Washington Railway and Electric Company erected a bus garage on the former site of the first Brightwood Railway Car. Also in 1930, the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCo) constructed a service building two blocks west of Georgia Avenue.”

- (g) Any removal or destruction requiring a partial demolition or raze permit under the D.C. Construction Code, including any demolition of non-bearing walls, interior finishes, or other interior non-bearing elements within a building where an interior space has been designated as a historic landmark.

Determination as to whether a proposal involves destruction of a building “in significant part” shall also depend on the extent to which character-defining historic features, historic or structural integrity, historic materials, or ability to convey historic significance would be lost.

Even with the retained portions proposed for incorporation into the project, the proposal will result in removal of facades (primary elevations) and substantially all of the Central Bus Garage, and a substantial portion of the structural walls, roofs, and significant parts of the Bond Bread Building. As such, it will result in demolition as defined by the regulations. Demolition is not consistent with the purposes of the preservation act as it pertains to the treatment of landmarks, which are:

- (A) To retain and enhance historic landmarks in the District of Columbia and to encourage their adaptation for current use; and
- (B) To encourage the restoration of historic landmarks.

#### *New Construction*

In projects resulting in demolition, the Mayor’s Agent must find that issuance of the permit is necessary in the public interest or that failure to issue a permit will result in unreasonable economic hardship to the owner. The Review Board is advisory to the Mayor’s Agent on such cases, providing its recommendations for consideration as part of the review. The applicants will be seeking designation as a project of special merit based on consistency of the project with the DUKE plan and the public benefits that it will provide, including the remediation of environmental contamination of the site. Even if the intent was to reuse the Central Bus Garage, it is likely that such remediation would require some level of demolition.

It remains unclear and largely unexplored as to whether the land planning and development goals of the DUKE plan could have been achieved by a project that more substantially retained and reused the existing buildings. While the project team has worked to incorporate elements of the buildings into the existing plans, the result is not a particularly good preservation or design solution. While the distinctive ziggurat roofline of the Bond Bread Building has been retained, the taller new construction overshadows directly behind it, and the retention of a wall section of the Central Bus Garage is insufficient in evoking any sense of the building’s existing form or character. From the standpoint of design and land planning, the elevations of the traditional and contemporary sections of the project seem entirely unrelated and unnecessarily contrasting with each other, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Street elevation proposes an extremely unfriendly pedestrian experience, with a continuous seven-bay, 105’ wide loading zone that will make high quality redevelopment of the adjacent parcel to the west problematic.

Unfortunately, there has been no fundamental rethinking of the concept itself, the organization of which is working at cross purposes with the goal of more substantive retention and reuse of the buildings. The basic plan and massing of the project -- a donut that pushes all of the residential units to the outside with a large open space in the center -- doesn't allow for meaningful preservation of the underlying buildings or incorporation of their facades into a larger composition. Instead, it creates an inherent tension in which any setbacks and modulation of massing -- necessary to create some relief on top of the historic buildings -- simply results in lost density and development potential.

This is particularly unfortunate, as it has been shown in the approval of numerous cases by the Board and/or the Mayor's Agent that substantial development, height and density can be achieved in the context of retained historic buildings, or the retention of substantial portions of those buildings that would continue to convey their historic character. Indeed, large scale industrial buildings such as the subject properties are the type that can often most readily lend themselves to being creatively adapted, altered, substantially added to and even selectively demolished in the context of a project that retains the buildings' essential character while adapting and expanding them for a new use.

The key to these projects has been retaining enough of the character-defining features of the buildings to convey their significance and ensuring that new construction has been massed and added in a manner that is respectful to the buildings. For instance, at the C & P Warehouse (1111 North Capitol Street, NE), even with a substantial portion of the building being demolished, the Board and Mayor's Agent found a 12 story office tower being added to this building to be compatible because it retained the most important characteristics and for the way the new construction was massed toward the rear of the site. At the Sears in Tenleytown (4500 Wisconsin Avenue, NW), the Board found the addition of six additional floors on top of the building to be compatible based on the creative manner in which the residential tower was shaped and sited atop the retained building, so that the new and old elements were respectful and distinct while simultaneously forming a new integrated composition. More recently, in its review of the project at 650 New York Avenue, NW, the Board found a project that added 12 additional floors to a block of three and four story historic buildings to be compatible due to the limited scope of demolition and the thoughtful placement and massing of the residential tower in relation to the surrounding smaller buildings.

A similar approach could work at the subject site without sacrificing its program. Rather than massing the residential units as a continuous wall at the perimeter of the site with half of the units facing to a mid-block courtyard, the mass could be pulled in and broken down into projecting wings with setbacks and exterior light courts. This would provide an opportunity to selectively retain more of the historic buildings, modulate the mass of the new construction above to create a more dynamic, less monolithic composition that could more fully integrate the historic buildings with the new construction, and result in more units that faced out with views of the city rather than inward to the interior courtyard.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board:*

- 1. Find the raze applications R1300018 and R1300019 for the Central Bus Garage and Bond Bread Buildings not consistent with the purposes of the historic preservation law;*
- 2. Find the project will result in extensive demolition of significant portions of the Central Bus Garage and Bond Bread Buildings, which is not consistent with the purposes of the historic preservation law;*
- 3. Recommend that the applicant revise the proposed project to retain more of the historic buildings, modulate the mass of the new construction to create a more dynamic, less monolithic composition more fully integrated with the historic buildings, and take advantage of the opportunity to provide a more appropriate project consistent with the DUKE plan.*